



The Last Ditch

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Violet Hunt (1862 - 1942)

This amusing but deeply poignant story describes the wartime experiences of a British aristocratic family who gradually realize that their old perquisites are passing away in the trenches of the Great War and that unprecedented new forces are pushing out the old ways. Lady Arles is the matriarch determined to resist to her last breath. Her bohemian young daughter Venice is set on a career as a poet and even dallies with a Socialist lover, but in some ways is the family member who seems the most helpless without her old aristocratic privileges. Another daughter, Ilsa, brings scandal to the family because of her sexual flings. Audley Bar, beloved by at least two of the Ladies Arles, is the ennui-laden aristocratic adventurer, determined despite his middle age to go forth to war and do his bit, especially after one young friend after another dies on the Western Front. The author pokes ironical, affectionate fun at her old-fashioned cast of characters, but as an ardent feminist and free-thinker finds ways to show her profound sympathies for the rising poor of England, the previously unprivileged who were finding new freedoms in the passing of the Old Order. In the novel, published while the War was still in full force, Hunt deftly sketches a portrait of a very human family, harrowed by loss and adrift in a new world.

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Read by Expatriate
Cover design by Kathryn Delaney

